



# EMBODY

By Sossity Chiricuzio

Perspectives

## **Embody - Radical Relationships**

by Sossity Chiricuzio, PQ Monthly

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It's how you do it, not who you are doing.

I'm speaking as someone who has never been in a monogamous relationship, though I witness beautiful examples of them frequently. I'm speaking as a person that has been observing the evolution of queer relationships for several decades, as the ideas of monogamy and non-monogamy have shifted back and forth in theory and currency and structure. From the middle of Arizona to the West Coast, from lesbian feminists to radical queers, and much of the in between.

There are issues of race and class and culture in there, too. Issues of politics and hierarchy and personal agency.

Non/Monogamy is no more an easy binary than just about anything else we want to codify, but it does

represent some major points in the spectrum of potential relationships. It also represents the dismissal of non-sexual relationships as intimate connections. As if friendships and family and community aren't full of courtship and emotion. As if mentorships and coalitions and collective garden plots require no negotiation or partnership.

The only real road maps we get to what makes a relationship are the ones we perceive around us, and the popular mythology that surrounds us.

There is this idea about how a relationship works that has been sold to us for centuries.  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2} = 1$ . As in a unit of value and a pattern of achievement. Carefully laid out in path and purpose, promising that we'll never be lonely again. This theory sells a hundred million services and items (and consolation prizes), and doesn't do justice to the amazing amount of work it takes to build your life with the needs of at least one entirely-different-than-you person in mind.

There's also this counter culture idea that monogamy is inherently flawed, and that only non-monogamous relationships can really break free of the system of the oppressor. Where  $1 + 1 + 1 > 2$ . An increasingly less subtle air of superiority that can sometimes crop up in otherwise fair minded company. This theory doesn't do justice to the amazing amount of patience and learning and faith involved in any intimate relationship, no matter how many people are involved.

So, there's sexual intimacy, and non-sexual intimacy - how does radical apply to all this?

Radical (Webster + me)

[rad-i-kuh l]

adjective

1. of or going to the root or origin; fundamental:

*To examine a relationship you are in, all the way to the roots, and tend it like a garden.*

2. thoroughgoing or extreme, especially as regards change from accepted or traditional forms

*To meet the actual needs of the people involved, rather than simply fulfill the perceived roles of those people.*

3. favoring drastic political, economic, or social reforms

*To be mindful of the various factors in the existence of another person, especially those where we have privilege.*

4. forming a basis or foundation.

*To do the work that is required to build a lasting trust and healthy connection.*

5. existing inherently in a thing or person

*To start from a place of self, grounded in your own inherent value and agency and responsibility.*

Every successful relationship I've been in has been built to suit the occupants and modified as life and growth and adventure called for.

Wait, though - what does 'successful' means in terms of a relationship, anyways? Popular mythology would frame it as a relationship that never wavers, never strays, and lasts until someone dies. While this is nicely dramatic for the purposes of storytelling, and sometimes actually happens, this is mostly a formula by which we're bound to deem almost all of our relationships as failures.

What if our stumbling and getting back up was measured as a unit of success? What if recognizing when it was time to transition, or take a break, or push through, were all moments of success? What if loving each other and learning from each other for as long as it is healthy for everyone involved and then letting go with love was success? What if getting out however you have to when your life is on the line was success? What if choosing to be single or celibate was success?

What if they already are, and we've just been convinced otherwise?

How we choose to be in the world in relation to other people is one of the most radical places we can access. To be a ripple of affirmation or reflection of truth. To build networks of information and resources. To build nets of safety and care. Remembering and learning, over and over, not to take the intimacy that forms there for granted, or to award it in popularity contests, or to use it against each other in anger. These are not tools we've been given, we just have our clumsy found art mechanisms to craft it all together.

Not everyone is wired for monogamy. Or polyamory. Or partnership. Or sex. Or large social gatherings. Or highly vocal friendships. Or meetings. One size most definitely does not fit all. I don't know if it's possible to try them on to see what does fit without ripping a seam or two, but I do believe it's possible to stitch ourselves back up and find beauty in the texture. A deeper knowing of what we need, and what not to offer.

Whatever rituals or structures or people we choose, whatever connections we form that bring us joy and strength, I hope we can build them on a radical foundation that feeds everyone involved. I hope we can collectively peel them open and rummage around, to swap and shape and examine thoroughly. I hope we craft them with intention, and hold our own centers.

I have such hopes for us.

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